A Ballad of Christmas

By

WALTER DE LA MARE

To.....

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A BALLAD OF CHRISTMAS

WALTER DE LA MARE

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A BALLAD OF CHRISTMAS

IT was about the deep of night,
And still was earth and sky,
When 'neath the moonlight dazzling bright,
Three ghosts came riding by.

Beyond the sea, beyond the sea,
Lie kingdoms for them all;
I wot their steeds trod wearily—
The journey was not small.

By rock and desert, sand and stream,
They footsore late did go:
Now like a sweet and blessèd dream
Their path was deep with snow.

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Shining like hoar-frost, rode they on,
  Three ghosts in earth's array:
It was about the hour when wan
  Night turns at hint of day.

Oh, but their hearts with woe distraught
  Hailed not the wane of night,
Only for Jesu still they sought
  To wash them clean and white.

For bloody was each hand, and dark
  With death each orbless eye;—
It was three Traitors mute and stark
  Came riding silent by.

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Silver their raiment and their spurs,
And silver-shod their feet,
And silver-pale each face that stares
Into the moonlight sweet.

And he upon the left that rode
Was Pilate, Prince of Rome,
Whose journey once lay far abroad,
And now was nearing home.

And he upon the right that rode
Herod of Salem sate,
Whose mantle dipped in children's blood
Shone clear as Heaven's gate.

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And he these twain betwixt that rode
  Was clad as white as wool,
Dyed in the Mercy of his God
  White was he crown to sole.

Throned mid a myriad Saints in bliss
  Rise shall the Babe of Heaven
To shine on these three ghosts, I wis,
  Smit thro' with sorrows seven.

Babe of the Blessèd Trinity
  Shall smile their steeds to see:
Herod and Pilate riding by,
  And Judas one of three.